

# POLO TIMES



*UAE Polo Claim Cowdray Gold Cup*  
**FIRST BRITISH OPEN TITLE**

**4,000 BRAVE THE RAIN**  
*Another Successful Rundle Cup*

**VICTOR LUDORUM UPDATE**  
*Season Successes So Far*

**PLUS: Alfie Hyde's Passions, £1,000,000 Raised by HRH The Prince of Wales**





## Contents



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**Cover photograph:**

Tommy Beresford celebrates his first ever British Open Polo Championship for The Cowdray Gold Cup. By @www.imagesofpolo.com

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## What's inside... August 2023



12



53



64

### News

- 4 All the Latest News
- 6 Your Letters

### Features

- 8 Big Picture

### Reports

- 12 The Out-Sourcing Inc. Royal Charity Polo Cup
- 15 The British Beach Polo Championships
- 16 The Out-Sourcing Inc. Royal Windsor Cup
- 18 The Warwickshire Cup
- 20 The British Open Polo Championship for The Cowdray Gold Cup
- 27 2023 Victor Ludorum Update

### Club Focus

- 37 Your Club News from Home and Abroad
- 43 Club Spotlight: vO Polo Club

### Women's Polo

- 44 International & Home
- 46 The Silver Jubilee Trophy
- 48 The British Ladies Open & High Goal Championship

### Youth Polo

- 51 All Aspects of Youth Polo

### Military Polo

- 53 The Rundle Cup

### Knowledge

- 56 Nutrition Focus: A Slightly Tricky Mare
- 58 Polodoc: Core-volution
- 60 Performance Coach: Praise Your Polo Game!
- 62 Playing Tips with Rege Ludwig: The Polo Style of Riding
- 64 Equine Osteopath: What Is Osteopathy?
- 66 Chukka Wellness: Mid-Season Rider Recovery
- 68 Polo Times Pony Powers

### Sidelines

- 71 Social Pages

### Polo Directory

- 76 What's On in August
- 78 Classifieds

### Final Bell

- 80 Passions: Alfie Hyde

Understanding what it takes to overcome fear and self-doubt has been at the root of Paul 'Stalkie' Stalker's personal transformation. He has proven experience of working with Polo Teams, Patrons and individual players for the past 3 years achieving outstanding results. With individual clients, Stalkie's aim is to untap, nurture and focus their passion and potential on becoming the best versions of themselves in all aspects of their lives, whatever their starting point



# Praise Your Polo Game!

## Building your strengths into superpowers

As the domestic polo season matures towards its climax, no matter how you have performed to date, there is still plenty of time to influence how your season pans out.

Whether you're seeking a boost of confidence, to change bad habits, to motivate yourself and the team around you, to sustain excellent form and flow, to take every high and low in your stride, or simply take maximum enjoyment and love from the game – whatever the outcome you desire, it is only YOU that can behave yourself towards it.

If there's one thing, one tool that I can recommend you use to promote, the behaviour that will suit you best, it's to LOOK FOR THE GOOD and PRAISE yourself and others, celebrating the smallest of successes as well as the glory moments.

To many of you this will sound like a simple concept which you probably think you've got nailed. You do it when you fist pump after a great hit or a goal, when you pat your horse, spur on a team-mate, hear your supporters cheer you – isn't that what praise is all about? This is maybe a decent starting point, but there's so much more you could be doing to make a habit of praise.

Looking for the good is a common trait amongst many of the world's consistently great players, some of whom I have recently had the pleasure of spending time with.



Stalkie on Camera in the USA

So, what tips can I give you so that you too can benefit from the powerful impact on performance that a consistent praise or 'abundance mentality' offers?

First up, attempts at improving your weaknesses are often a waste of precious time. Instead, focus on managing your weaknesses and building your strengths into superpowers.

In polo, the skills needed for each position differ greatly and it does not follow that a player who excels at number one will also make a great number four and vice versa. In every high performing team, players will already have talent and enthusiasm for their jobs – these are the assets that need highlighting and praising.

Through encouraging and praising strengths, a coach can ensure that individuals are self-motivated and will dynamically contribute to the team. When you do what you enjoy and are best at, peak performance excels.

### Playing to Your Strengths

Your personal strengths are the things you are good at. These are likely to be the very reasons you've decided to pursue a polo career. Strengths soar when you devote a significant amount of time to them and, as you do so, your feelings of pride and satisfaction grow.

Think back to what you really enjoyed doing at school. Was it English, maths, cookery, sport, science perhaps? Whatever subject you enjoyed, you were probably good at it too. There is compelling evidence to suggest what it takes to become world class at a certain pursuit or activity.

It has been calculated that it can take between 10 to 17 years of dedicated effort from beginning an activity to mastering it. In the book *Outliers: The Story of Success*, sociologist Malcolm Gladwell supports the '10,000-Hour Rule', claiming that the key to achieving world-class expertise in any skill is largely a matter of practicing the correct way for a total of around 10,000 hours.



Working alongside Hilario Ulloa and the England Polo Team



Stalkie as mindset coach to the victorious England Westchester Cup team





Celebrating success with the Park Place team at the HPA Victor Ludorum Dinner

Gladwell backs up his theory by citing sports stars such as Jonny Wilkinson, Tiger Woods, David Beckham, cyclist Chris Hoy and tennis' Williams sisters, who all became world-beaters because of their obsessive devotion to building their strengths since childhood.

People who focus on their strengths every day are six times as likely to be engaged in their jobs, they are more productive both individually and in teams, and they are three times as likely to say they have an excellent quality of life.

What are your polo strengths? Ask yourself the following questions:

1. When you practice them, do you get better at them?
2. Do you know you can perform them well?
3. Do others applaud when you do them?
4. Do you get paid well for doing them?
5. Do you feel pride and pleasure when you do them?

Examples of your strengths might be:

- "I'm well mounted, so I play well."
- "I hit the ball sweet and long. It gives me an advantage over my opponent."
- "I am experienced. I know the best course of action."
- "I am fit and full of energy. Bring it on!"

Use your strengths to steer you towards doing more of what you love and you're good at rather than burn up belief, time and energy in what you don't.

When you catch your colleagues and horses doing things right, you must follow it up with praise and positive affirmation. But always start with yourself! If you play polo in an environment where praise is slow to be given or not given at all, you may feel undervalued and unloved. Patting your own back helps to propel you towards the summits in polo you envisage for yourself and helps you when you're questioning whether you can conquer them.

Aligning your strengths and managing your weaknesses involves praising and celebrating bite-size successes on the journey. If you can't do great things



Stalkie celebrating Emlor's Eduardo Moore win

immediately, do small things in a great way to lead you there.

### What You Focus On, You Feel

Focusing on your successes and praising them will instil the feelings that you will want to replicate. Self-positive feedback pricks the subconscious to give you more things to praise. This is all part and parcel of developing a 'growth mindset' which is proven to motivate teams to excel.

By focusing on and celebrating the many great experiences that polo playing provides you – the special bond between player and horse, the bond between team members, elite mental and physical stimulation, the blend of technical and tactical skills – and by focusing on and celebrating each little win you achieve in a game, you will hardwire these feelings into your brain and want more of them.

Remind yourself of your three biggest polo successes ever. What are your biggest successes of this season so far? What are your biggest polo successes of today?

Hold on to the thoughts and feelings that picturing your successes bring to you and celebrate them for at least 30 seconds. This is long enough to allow your brain to process them and to create a structural change to store these wonderful feelings. By expanding its storage system of positive experiences, the brain will help us to experience those feelings more readily and for longer periods of time.

Team mates, coaches, grooms, horses all benefit from your praise, but start with yourself and catch yourself doing things right!

When you train or play well, reinforce the joyous feelings associated with it; video it, record it, write it down. Create a memory bank of good feelings and learning experiences that you can always call upon.

Don't wait to celebrate your successes, or that of others. Celebrate the simple things. The more you do, the more addictive it becomes and the better you feel. Start now!

Using positive psychology tools such as these will build the foundations for a positive self-image and support you to live according to the standards that you aspire to in polo. ❌

Paul 'Stalkie' Stalker is excited to announce the launch of his brand new book *Raise Your Polo Game*, which contains 60 videos activated by QR codes, exercises, case studies and insights allowing you to access support and guidance whenever you need it. You can expect to learn:

- How brain training can empower you to rethink and reframe challenging polo situations
- To stay calm in the heat of the game and control the controllables
- To focus on what you're doing rather than what you're thinking
- How to use your focus, physiology and language to drive positive mental and physical health
- To understand 'why we do what we do' in our mindset, giving us freedom to play better polo, improve our relationships and lead fulfilling, purposeful lives on and off the field

For those who wish to flavour Stalkie's insights into what a peak polo mindset looks like, *Raise Your Polo Game* can be ordered online at: [www.raisepolo.com](http://www.raisepolo.com)

